

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting – Work Session

Tuesday - June 9, 2009 - 2:00 p.m.

A special meeting – work session of the Knox County Commission was held on Tuesday, June 9, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. Administrative Assistant Candice Richards was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission members present were: Anne Beebe-Center, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2, and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3. County staff present included: Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, and Finance Director Kathy Robinson.

Special Meeting – Work Session – Agenda		
Tuesday – June 9, 2009 – 2:00 p.m.		
I.	2:00	Meeting Called To Order
II.	2:01	Discussion Items
		1. Update and Review of Meeting with Municipalities
		2. Update and Review of Meeting with Lincoln County
		3. Update on Space Needs
III.		Adjourn

I. Meeting Called to Order
Commission Chair Anne Beebe-Center called the June 9, 2009 special meeting - work session of the Knox County Commission to order at 2:00 p.m.

II. Discussion Items
1. Update and Review of Meeting with Municipalities.
Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center reminded the Commission that County Administrator Andrew Hart will be helping the sub committees, for animal control and solid waste, to set up their meetings in the Commission Hearing room. She asked if the other commissioners would be interested in being on one of these.

Commissioner Roger Moody will attend the meetings for the Solid Waste Committee.
Commissioner Richard Parent will attend the meetings for the Animal Control Committee.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked what direction the Commission would like to go with the issues brought up at the meeting with the towns.

Commissioner Roger Moody commented that it is a matter of how much the County handle. Everyone’s schedules are filling up.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that the County will need to see what County’s capacity is to do what the towns suggested.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center suggested meeting with the County Attorney, Peter Marchesi, so that all three commissioners could get caught up on current projects, including the Union Negotiations.

(A meeting had already been scheduled for June 11, 2009 to meet with Peter Marchesi in Executive Session to discuss legal issues. Commissioner Parent stated that he was unaware of this meeting and that he would not be able attend. The Work Session was paused so that he could call County Administrator Andrew Hart to see if the meeting on the 11th could be changed. Commissioner Parent was told that the date would stay as is, and that Commissioner Parent would be caught up via phone at a later time.)

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center suggested briefly discussing the various subjects brought up at the June 4th meeting with the municipalities.

Municipal Inventory Lists
There was a discussion about the inventory lists that EMA Director Ray Sisk maintains for Emergency Management purposes. Not all Knox County towns have participated and submitted lists to Director Sisk. It was suggested by maintaining these lists and that putting the information on the County website on the EMA page may be helpful to the towns. Director Sisk may be able to get the remaining towns to participate if it is for EMA purposes. Even if the information is out there, some towns may not want to let another town borrow their equipment. One reason might be the fact that some equipment can only be operated by qualified operators so a staff member may have to go with the equipment to operate it. There is sometimes extra equipment, but not

always extra operators. Some towns may not like this information being made public because voters may complain if they see the list and think that their town has purchased too much equipment. Having the information on the EMA page of the County website may be a way to prevent a negative reaction. It was suggested that Director Sisk be asked which towns had not reported their inventory lists to him and ask him to try again.

Bidding for Maintenance

While it was mentioned at the meeting with the towns that the County should have a maintenance building where towns could take their equipment to get maintenance, no one else seemed interested in the idea and it was unlikely to happen. The Commission decided to remove this item from the list of discussion topics. A regional bid for maintenance would also not be feasible because every town is used to going to specific places for maintenance for their equipment, and it is very unlikely that one maintenance agreement would work for every town and cover the maintenance of all of their equipment. Equipment is very specialized and it would cost a lot to hire mechanics to sit around waiting for something to break.

Building Codes

Building codes require a certain uniformity, but also need to be enforced. The State mandates if the town has a building inspector, but it is up to the town to take care of it. This may not be something that the County should be involved with. Most towns have a full time person on their staff for this who also serves other functions in the town. A few towns share. It was suggested that the towns would work this out on their own and that the towns may have trouble having a person from the County coming in to be the expert, especially since the towns know more about this than the County does. The County could provide the training, but should not mandate any code requirements at the county level. That should be left up to the State. It would be too difficult for a County person to keep everything straight when each town has different requirements. It was suggested that the towns may be angry at the County for implementing anything on this subject, even if the intention was to help out the towns.

Road Engineer

It was suggested that rather than hiring an engineer to keep on staff, it would be better to contract with someone at a preset rate to give advice, and be available, to the towns when needed. A road engineer is needed generally in the summer months when most road work is done, but also at any time of the year when there are major construction projects going on. Warren used a road engineer to give advice when building their roads and he was consulted about twice a week during the peak construction period. The roads built during that time have stood up well over the last few years and have not needed maintenance. A road engineer might be needed to go to the towns and teach them tips for building roads (specifics such as how thick asphalt should be, temperature of the asphalt, sizing culverts, quality and specs of materials, getting a project organized, etc). The engineer may also be able to help with bidding out for what the towns need.

The Commission will first need to determine whether there is a genuine interest from the towns for the County to provide a road engineer to them. If the towns are interested, and RFQ/RFP would need to be developed, with input from the towns. The County Administration Office will email the towns to find out if they are interested.

Safety Training

At the meeting with the towns, several people had mentioned that MMA was already doing a good job training the municipal employees, but that sometimes it was hard to get enough people from one or more towns for the MMA people to come train them. It was suggested that if the training was done more regionally, and held on County property, attendance for the training may be more successful. Some questions were asked about how to do MMA training online, as well as what the schedule for MMA workshops are and where to find the information. Administrative Assistant Candice Richards was asked to research this and to forward the information to the Commission and to Finance Director Kathy Robinson.

General Assistance

This subject was mentioned at the meeting with the towns, but mostly in the form of explaining how it was handled in a few towns. The conversation did not lean towards the County taking over this function for the towns. Some towns had separate funds for individuals who obviously needed help but did not qualify for GA. Each town handles this process a little bit different. It may not work well for a County person to handle this because sometimes the person may have to travel to the individual's home to fill the paperwork out if the person could not drive to an office. It may also be a lot more work, and too much of an area, than one person could handle. While a County employee may be more objective because they do not live in the same town as the people they are helping, those who need GA may be more willing to speak to someone at the town level because it is someone they already know. It is fairly common for a town's GA budget to run over because of the number of citizens who need help. For the County to get involved, the County

would need to see what it would cost to handle the GA needs of the towns, and see if the County had the resources to do so.

IT

It was not clear if the town representatives actually understood what the County meant by “IT Services”. Not everyone understands what an IT department does or what kind of services those types of individuals can provide. Some individuals thought it meant that if a town had a technical problem, the County would send someone to fix it. Others thought that it meant that the County would help the town figure out what the scope of technical needs are for the town. The County would need to decide if the intent of the County was to have the County’s IT staff do for the towns what they are already doing for the County, which would mean identifying the long-term needs are, developing a secure informational network at the municipal level, and providing the expertise to write specifications. The County would have to look at what it would take to provide IT consulting to the towns. The County could also look at helping towns to look at helping the towns have a better understanding what “good practices” are with informational technology at the government level. Towns already have a person or persons to provide them with troubleshooting services and it is not feasible for the County’s IT staff to provide troubleshooting the towns. The Commission decided to invite the County’s Chief Information/Security Officer, Jeff Lake, to the next work session to see what his thoughts are on the subject.

Ambulance Service

This topic was not brought up at the meeting with Lincoln County, so it is unknown if towns in Lincoln County share ambulance services. This seemed to be a sensitive subject for some of the towns because there is a long history of towns looking at whether or not to work together and combine resources, or to have/keep their own ambulance service. While some town leadership would like to be able to share resources or to contract with another town to provide ambulance services, the taxpayers have not always wanted to pay another town for ambulance services. Another issue is that the taxpayers feel loyal to their ambulance service and feel it would be a “slap in the face” to those individuals to end their employment and to contract elsewhere for ambulance services. Some of the towns that have ambulance service do provide back up to other towns. This issue will be discussed more at the next meeting with the towns in August.

County Tax Assessor

At the meeting with the towns, the idea of a County assessor was brought up, but then the subject was dropped. The towns do assessments differently and this may cause a problem if switching to a County-run assessment. A county level assessor may not receive much acceptance from the towns. Towns budget for their assessors by appropriating money at town meetings, and that amount is what the assessors get paid. It was suggested that Jim Murphy, an assessor who liked the idea, should be invited to the next Work Session so that the Commission could learn more about assessors. (This topic had not been brought up at the meeting with Lincoln County.)

2. Update and Review of Meeting with Lincoln County.

The general consensus of the Commission was that Lincoln County seems to be light years ahead of Knox. Lincoln has a completely different relationship with their towns and seems to cater to their coastal towns, possibly because of the valuations of the coastal towns. The impression when at the meeting was that Knox was there to learn from Lincoln, and not really a two-way sharing session. The expectation had been to hear more about what needs Lincoln had to see if there were things that the two counties could work on together. Need to have more discussions about Communications and Economic Development. It was suggested that then the Commission meets with Waldo County, the agenda should be limited so that it does not last as long as the meeting with Lincoln County.

3. Update on Space Needs.

The group working on the space needs, including Commissioner Parent, has agreed to put out an RFP for offers (for buildings and/or property). The group has not specified acreage or other specifications yet. The needs of the Dispatch department will be the determining factor when looking at potential properties, because of the critical nature of communications. Some minuses with a property may possibly be overcome with newer technology. The County Administrator would be responsible for working with the necessary people to develop an RFP and to get it out there. The two departments, EMA and Dispatch, will need to work together to see what spaces can be shared so that less space is needed overall. If the County goes out to bond to build or renovate, the bond amount will have to be something that the voters can live with, or it will never pass. It is hard to guess what dollar amount would be approved by the voters.

A question was raised about the potential of Lincoln County’s dispatch merging with Knox County’s dispatch. Lincoln County’s dispatch center is possibly Knox’s call volume, but per the estimates of square footage set by QA13, the two sets of staff and equipment would not fit into

Lincoln's dispatch center. QA13 feels that they gave the County numbers that represent the barebones needs and that their numbers are what the County actually needs for square footage. The department heads are willing to take a lot less. They are calling some things industry standard minimums. The Commission may want to look at counties, such as Kennebec, with new dispatch centers to compare.

III. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roger Moody. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting
held on July 14, 2009.**

Anne H. Beebe-Center, Chair – Commissioner District #1

Richard L. Parent, Jr. – Commissioner District #2

Roger A. Moody – Commissioner District #3